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ABSTRACT

At the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., in September 2002, the U.S. Secretary of Education outlined the Bush Administration's ideas for education reform. This booklet contains the secretary's remarks. He focused on the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, presenting several examples of the act in action. He also discussed additional initiatives such as the State Scholars program, whose goals are to challenge students by providing more rigorous course work, not just for honor students but for all students, and Good Start, Grow Smart, a program that prepares children in Head Start and other early-childhood programs in language, literacy, and numerical skills. The secretary also touched upon professional development for teachers and teacher education, stressing the importance of mastery of a subject and stating, "Far too many teachers are not trained in the subjects they're teaching." Following his prepared remarks, the secretary fielded questions from the press corps. He addressed, briefly, school vouchers, SATs, teachers' pay, teachers' technology skills, academic achievement in rural schools, teacher training, government funding for education, career-oriented classes in high schools, ways to evaluate the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act, affirmative-action programs, and plans for improving K-12 math and science programs. (WFA)

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Confronting Challenges to Change

REMARKS OF U.S. SECRETARY OF EDUCATION ROD PAIGE

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

SEPTEMBER 9, 2002

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Thank you very much for that introduction, and thank you also for the invitation to join you here at the National Press Club. I'm grateful for the opportunity once again to talk about a topic that's dear to my heart and to the president's as well, and that's—of course—education.

I brought some friends from Singapore along with me. Most of you know that Singaporean students hold the distinction of having the highest math scores in the world. Later this afternoon, we are signing an agreement to work together because there is much we can learn from each other about improving student achievement. One of the areas in which they're most interested is our new education reforms.

As you know, President Bush has called upon this nation to improve its education system. He feels, as most Americans feel, that ours is a great nation. But he knows also that it cannot sustain its greatness unless we drastically improve our public education system. On his fourth day in office, the president put a proposal before Congress designed to change the culture of American public education. He asked the Congress to undertake a vigorous bipartisan debate of his proposal.

The *No Child Left Behind* education reform proposal was designed to change the public education system from one that educates some of the children very well to one that educates all of its children well.

When I stood before you this time last year we were at an educational crossroads. Both the House and Senate had responded to the president's call and joined in bipartisan support of his proposal for improving American education. We knew, however, that final passage of the bill hinged on whether the conference committee could reconcile the differences between the two bills and achieve common ground.

We had plenty of reason for concern if the measure failed. Although many schools in America were doing a great job, national report cards showed a growing achievement gap between those who were hopeful and those who were hopeless. Those reports showed that:

- Two out of three fourth-graders couldn't read proficiently;
- Seven out of 10 inner-city and rural fourth-graders couldn't read at the most basic level; and
- America's 12th-graders ranked among the lowest in math and science achievement among their counterparts around the world.

Those are not just cold statistics. They represent the human toll of an education system that has failed too many children.

As I stood here before you last year, my message was one of urgency—urgency for the children who are falling through the cracks, and urgency for a great nation at risk of losing ground. Then, exactly a week later, on September 11th, the unthinkable happened.

America was attacked. And a sadder but stronger nation united to face the grim task of mourning for the dead, healing the wounds and rooting out terrorism where it lives.

In the months that followed, our president led the way with a steely resolve to protect America and bring those responsible to justice. Yet, throughout, he never once lost focus on those things that matter most right here at home: creating jobs; expanding opportunities to save and invest and own a piece of the American dream; and, especially, educating every single child. Even while building an international coalition to fight terror, the president was building a bipartisan congressional coalition to improve our schools. The result was the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001—a remarkable consensus by both parties in both houses of Congress that *now* is the time for fundamental change, and *now* is the time to break with the past and educate all of our children—no matter the color of their skin or the accent of their speech.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* gave us the framework to reform American education. The framework was built upon the great principles of accountability and results; local control and flexibility; increased choices for parents; quality teachers in every classroom; and teaching methods based on solid research.

President Bush made sure we got enough resources to get the job done. He provided historic levels of funding. We have the largest education budget for disadvantaged children in U.S. history. We have nearly $1 billion in funding for the president's Reading First initiative. These are remarkable levels of funding to ensure that every child in America's schools learns the one skill on which all others depend: reading.

Our new education reforms make the best use of every tax dollar spent on education by funding programs that follow good research and by insisting on accountability and results. In that way, taxpayers know what they're getting for their money, and parents know if their children are learning.

We have high expectations for every child—and we don't just mean the top 10 kids in the class. I was in Little Rock, Ark., last week as the president kicked off the first State Scholars program.

The goal of this initiative is to challenge young minds by providing more rigorous course work, not just for honor students but for all students. We want every child to learn, because we know they can learn. That includes the 6.4 million children enrolled in special education. The president saw to it that special education got the largest funding increase ever requested by a president—$1 billion more to serve children with disabilities.

The new education reforms expand parents' opportunities for choice. If children are not learning and schools do not improve, then moms and dads have new options. They can choose one-on-one tutoring or after-school help, or they can enroll their children in a better public school. Many local parents in Cleveland, Ohio, chose vouchers. The U.S. Supreme Court gave them and families nationwide a great victory by upholding their right to make that choice. It bears emphasizing that what we're offering parents is choice—an *option*, not an *obligation*. What they do with it is up to them and them alone. Parents of children in low-performing schools, for example, may choose to transfer. Or they may choose to stay put and work to make the school better. It's their decision. What's important is that they have the freedom to choose.

Our new education reforms require a whole new focus. Programs like the Blue Ribbon Schools award will now reflect the goals of *No Child Left Behind* by rewarding progress, not process.

As you would expect with a new initiative as complex as *No Child Left Behind*, there are still a lot of flaps to nail down. As we work to implement these reforms—and you in the press work to cover our efforts—I believe it is critical that we keep the mission in perspective. Our education system is working for some kids, but it is NOT working for too many kids. Our job is to make a good system better. And this we can do.

With our new education reforms, we have the tools. We have the money. And we have the educational expertise. All we have to do is knuckle down to the task like Cheryl Dunham, a first-grade teacher in Michigan who wrote the president to say, "I believe as you do that every child can learn. And I am doing all that I know how to do to make that happen." There are many Cheryls out there, quietly doing their part to implement these reforms. And I am grateful to each and every one of them.

We all know the devil is in the details, and we are diligently working on those details. The heavy lifting began back in January when we met with all the chief state school officers at Mt. Vernon. Since then, we have provided guidelines and assistance. We've addressed hundreds of phone calls and faxes and requests for information. And we have provided timely advice on our Web site. I've covered 26 states and 38 cities to meet with local parents, teachers, community leaders and educators—people who really have to make the new law work. And we've moved on the regulations with all due haste.

Now I don't normally like to criticize the work of others, but I have read recent press reports saying some are suggesting the Department has been slow on the uptake. I respectfully disagree. In the short time since January 8, the Department's production of regulations, guidance and dear-colleague letters has been voluminous. The last time the education bill was reauthorized in 1994, it was not nearly as complex as *No Child Left Behind*. I know many

of you have read the new law, right? It's like cracking open *War and Peace*. But despite this, we have moved quickly at every stage of the process.

Granted, if I'd had my druthers, states would have had everything they needed the moment the president put pen to paper on January 8. But that would have required federal workers, sitting in cubicles here in Washington, writing regulations in a vacuum. I wanted what the president wanted: regulations that are based upon input from the *practitioners working in the trenches*— teachers and principles and chief state school officers—so the regulations we put out would reflect the *real world*.

I believe we have balanced the need for early guidance with the president's desire—and my desire—for comprehensive and meaningful input. We have a new, complex law. We have a new school year. It is early yet. State and local educators are working their fingers to the bone trying to do what is right for their kids. I think we owe them the courtesy of treating them like the professionals they are by giving them the chance to get all their ducks in a row before we start giving them the bare-bulb treatment.

Nobody said this would be simple. I know. I used to run one of the nation's largest school systems, so I know change is not easy—especially on a scale as large as this. We're plowing historic new ground here. And I am confident we will succeed. It's already happening around the country.

Take Indiana. They now put their schools' performance out for all to see. They put it on their Web site and in newspapers nationwide. So I know this can be done.

Alabama hit the ground running with its Reading First funding. In just two months this summer, they trained 2,300 teachers in solid, research-based reading instruction. So I know this can be done.

Saint Paul Public Schools in Minnesota jumped at the opportunity to empower parents with greater choice. They placed nearly all who applied for transfers in the schools of their choice. So I know this can be done.

Colorado Springs identified the schools where students need more help, and they are providing the parents with lists of supplemental service providers. So I know this can be done.

Someone else who knows this can be done is Joyce Bales, the superintendent of public schools in Pueblo, Colo.

To Dr. Bales, low-income does not mean low expectations. She believes that every child can learn. So all the things the president and I talk about, she did. She got a research-based reading program. She got the parents involved. She set high standards and high expectations and insisted on results. And now people in Pueblo know what history has long shown: When you raise the bar, people rise to the challenge. Student achievement in Pueblo soared.

A recent study by the Council of Great City Schools identified four large urban school districts that are actually closing the achievement gap. Their study, *Foundations for Success*, produced new evidence that even under the most difficult circumstances, children can learn if you get it right. And the best way to get it right is to make sure the teacher at the front of the classroom knows the subject matter.

Most of us can remember a favorite teacher. I had two favorite teachers: my parents. Their example inspired me to become a teacher as well. And it was in the classroom that I discovered the truth in the words of World War II Gen. Omar Bradley when he said, "Teachers are the real soldiers of democracy. Others can defend it, but only teachers can make it work."

Few people have the influence over our lives that teachers do. That is why the president and I are committed to making sure that there's a quality teacher in every classroom by 2006. That commitment is backed by the greatest federal investment in quality teaching ever: $3 billion to recruit, prepare and keep good teachers.

Not long ago, the Department released its first study on teacher quality, which showed that we have to do a lot to prepare better teachers. We have many great teachers, but not nearly enough. Teacher professional development needs greater focus on rich

content. In some states, certification requirements just simply lack adequate rigor. More emphasis needs to be placed on alternative routes to certification.

Far too many teachers are not trained in the subjects they're teaching. Chief among them are math and science teachers. Today in America, more than half of the middle school math and science teachers did not major or minor in the subject they're teaching. That may help explain why one in three 4th-, 8th- and 12th-grade students scored at the lowest level on the math portion of the National Assessment of Educational Progress test. It also may explain why student achievement in science is as bad as it is. The president's budget calls for more funding to increase the ranks of talented math and science teachers.

Our new education reforms ask a lot of America's teachers, and we owe them something in return. We owe them our respect. We owe them our support. And we owe them the training and the tools to succeed. That means we need to do a few things.

We need to strengthen academic standards for teachers. Some months back, at Mrs. Bush's White House Conference on Teacher Preparation, Sandra Feldman, president of the American Federation of Teachers, said, "Good teachers need to know deeply the subject they teach. You can't teach what you don't know well." How true!

At a time when we desperately need strong teachers in our classroom, we should be doing all we can to attract and keep the best and brightest candidates. A good place to start is to draw from nontraditional sources, like Teach for America, Transition to Teachers and Troops to Teachers.

We must also improve the way we prepare teachers in our colleges and universities. I was a dean of a college of education for 10 years, and I know the special problems these schools face and the responsibilities they bear. But I am also mindful that the original idea behind colleges of education was to create rigorous professional training for teachers, just as we did for medical schools and law schools.

Yet here we are a century later with research showing that many teachers fresh out of college lack what they need to know and be able to do in order to meet the challenges in the classroom. More than one in five will give up and leave the profession in the first three years. Despite this, many schools of education have continued business as usual, focusing heavily on how to *be* a teacher, when the evidence cries out for a deeper understanding of the subject they'll be teaching, how to monitor student progress and how to help students who are falling behind.

I believed as a superintendent, and I believe now, that we must do whatever it takes to fill our classrooms with quality teachers. It all starts there.

New York City has already done this. There was a time when they had a great teacher shortage, and too many of the teachers they had were teaching out of field. All that has changed. New York has been aggressive about training and recruiting good teachers, and now it's well on its way to implementing one of the most important parts of our reform program.

But all the good intentions in the world and all the reforms in the world won't mean a thing if we don't have safe classrooms for students and teachers. That is why the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 reauthorized the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program to help ensure greater security and vigilance in our schools.

Safety above all else—that's job one. And that job got even harder on September 11th. I stood at ground zero after the attacks. It was clear that this is a new world that we're living in, and it calls for new approaches to protecting our schools and the children in them. We are committed to learning all we can so we can communicate what we know to our schools, where teachers and principals are the ultimate first responders.

As news of the tragedies unfolded live on television, millions of moms and dads looked up from their work and their first thought was their children. And who was there to protect them? Thousands of teachers and principals nationwide. They sheltered our children from evil when they needed it most. They went the extra mile to

ease children's and parents' fears. And while the world as we knew it literally came crashing down around us, teachers and principals carried on in the truest spirit of those called to this noble profession.

One of those principals was Pat Hymel. Pat works at an elementary school not far from here. When the planes hit the World Trade Center, she called her husband, who worked at the Pentagon, and said, "How thick are those walls over there?" Shortly afterwards, a teacher rushed into her classroom to say that a plane had crashed nearby. All of a sudden, she had that funny feeling, something told her that the love of her life, the father of her children, the man she enjoyed dancing with in the kitchen, was gone. Just like that. But despite that feeling, she put her own fears aside because the kids were still in the school, and they come first.

Hours later, after all the students had been safely delivered to the arms of their parents, Pat learned that her instinct had been correct. Her husband, Lt. Col. Robert Hymel, died when Flight 77 hit the Pentagon. This patriot died serving the country he loved.

I know I speak for the president when I say our teachers and principals are the quiet heroes of 9/11. And their hazardous duty has not ended to this day. Many children still have fears. Many children still have questions. And America's teachers and principals are there for them, every day. We owe each and every one of you teachers a big debt of gratitude. We can start right now by thanking one of those heroes, Pat Hymel, from Hoffman-Boston Elementary School, right here in Arlington, Va.

Everything I've talked about so far involves K through 12 education. But high-quality education doesn't stop there. It applies to postsecondary programs as well. And the president's latest budget calls for the largest student-aid funding increase in the history of these programs—$55 billion in new grants, loans and work-study funds that are going to help eight million students.

But our institutions of higher education still have work to do. They need to improve the completion and retention rates of students once they enroll so students can learn the skills they need and get

the jobs they want. We want to do our part as well, and so we have partnered with the United States Department of Labor so we can help Americans get the skills they need in order to succeed.

We are very mindful that a child's success in school depends on the critical first five years of his or her life. We've had good prompting in this area from a former teacher who remains passionate about this subject: Mrs. Bush.

Drawing on themes developed by the first lady's summit on early childhood cognitive development, the president outlined the new frontiers for education reform. His initiative, called "Good Start, Grow Smart," prepares children in Head Start and other early-childhood programs in language, literacy and numerical skills.

I have sat with an inspirational leader, inspirational math teacher Jaime Escalante. We saw Hispanic moms and dads cry as they talked about their hopes and dreams for a better life for their children. So I know it can be done. I have stood alongside one of the legends of the civil rights movement, Dorothy Height, as she rallied the black community to fight for this call. So I know it can be done.

The same high standards we expect from schools, we expect from ourselves as well. The Department has made great strides in making this agency more efficient and responsive to better serve our customers—teachers, educators and taxpayers.

As we approach the first anniversary of September 11, thoughts turn to the ideals upon which this country was founded. I hope all of you will mark your calendar for 2 o'clock Eastern Daylight Time on Tuesday, Sept. 17th, and join the president, me and school children from coast-to-coast in the Pledge across America.

One of my guests today is Vincent Lopez, a second-grader from one of my favorite schools, Amidon Elementary, right here in Washington, D.C. Vincent will help lead this pledge at his school this year. Vincent, will you please stand?

The words of the "Pledge of Allegiance" hold even more meaning for us this year as we reflect on our blessings as Americans.

I want to close with a poem that a seventh-grader from North Carolina wrote and sent to President Bush. The author's name is Molly Peacock, and the title of the poem is "Freedom."

Freedom means that
I can decide:
Where I want to work
What I want to do
How I live my life.

Freedom means that I can think:
The thoughts I want to think.
Freedom means that I can dream.

As we begin this new year, we do so knowing that while we've come far in our mission since a year ago, many challenges lie ahead. But we face these challenges with a renewed sense of purpose and hope.

As Molly's words remind us, now more than ever, the freedom we defend is our children's right to freedom: Freedom to grow, freedom to learn and freedom to achieve their dreams.

Thank you very much.

Question and Answer Session
Moderated by Larry Bivins, National Press Club Board of Governors

Larry Bivins: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press Club. My name is Larry Bivins, and I am a Washington correspondent for Gannett News Services and a member of the National Press Club Board of Governors. I'd like to welcome Press Club members and their guests in the audience today, as well as those of you watching on C-SPAN or listening to this program on National Public Radio.

Head table guests today are: Zachary Coyle, reporter with the *San Francisco Chronicle*; Bart Jansen, a reporter, *Portland Press Herald*; Mark Murray, reporter, the *National Journal*; Michael Kartman, a reporter with *Education Daily*; and Pat Hymel of Hoffman Boston Elementary School in Arlington, who is a guest of our speaker. Ms. Hymel's husband died in the 9/11 attack on the Pentagon last year. We have Sharyn Flanagan, copy editor, *USA Today*; John Gibbons, director of public affairs for the Department of Education; Frank Aukofer, National Press Club Speaker Committee chair. Skipping over our speaker, we have with us Mike Doyle, a reporter with *McClatchy News* and the member of the Speaker Committee who organized today's event; next to him we have Dr. Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women; Fredreka Schouten, national education correspondent for Gannett News Service; Virginia Edwards, editor, *Education Week;* and Toby Eckert, reporter with the *San Diego Union Tribune*.

Students across the nation and lawmakers here in Washington returned to work last week from their summer recess. They all confront a lot of unfinished business, and so does our guest today, a man who stands uniquely at the intersection of the White House and the classroom.

Education Secretary Rod Paige is the principal adviser to President Bush on education matters. He is also the manager of a bureaucracy with 4,800 employees and a $54 billion budget, an agency that, not so long ago, a number of congressional lawmakers hoped to abolish.

But no one is trying to eliminate the Education Department now.

Instead, with passage this year of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, Secretary Paige's department was handed more money and fresh responsibilities. It's his job now to make these programs work, help promote them nationwide and push for further programs.

Though the federal government still accounts for only about 7 percent of all education spending, Washington can significantly shape the classroom experiences of the nation's 53 million elementary and secondary school students. The *No Child Left Behind Act*, signed by President Bush in January, sets new yearly progress requirements for schools. It institutes new student assessments in math and reading, and requires that parents of students in chronically failing schools be given more choices. Congress and the White House avoided a showdown on the bill over school vouchers, but that issue too has now been put back on the blackboard, with the Supreme Court's ruling upholding the use of public vouchers for private schools.

To get these school reforms up and running, Secretary Paige will have to draw upon all his background in the classroom, on athletic playing fields and in the school boards, where politics can get very up close and personal.

While he's new to Washington, education is in his blood. The son of public school educators, Secretary Paige earned a bachelor's degree from Jackson State University in Mississippi and a master's and doctorate degree from Indiana University. He served for a decade as dean of the College of Education at Texas Southern University, six years as a trustee of the Houston Independent School District and seven years as superintendent of the Houston district. For anyone who knows the average tenure of a big school system's superintendent, that's extraordinary enough, but last year he was named national superintendent of the year by the American Association of School Administrators.

Please join me in giving a hearty National Press Club welcome to Secretary Paige.

Bivins: We have a number of questions from members of the audience.

The first one: The *No Child Left Behind* law requires that all teachers hired after the start of the school year be fully qualified. Given the extreme shortage of teachers, how realistic is this provision?

Secretary Rod Paige: This provision is not only realistic, it is a necessary condition to meet our goal of leaving no child behind. The first thing we've got to do is make sure that in every classroom there is a highly qualified teacher.

I'm not so sure that we have a legitimate, real teacher shortage if we use our imagination and innovation. I was in Detroit just recently, and they seem to have been able to find teachers. We can go to New York, and we see what is happening in New York, where they have been able to find teachers by using innovative, non-traditional methods.

We may need to do some work on the structure of our teacher preparation programs and those pipelines through which teachers pass in order to become teachers. But I think there are many people out in the world who would wish to be teachers, who would be wonderful teachers. And we need to provide the mechanism through which these people can gain access to the teaching classroom.

Bivins: What impact do you believe the recent Supreme Court decision on school vouchers will have on public schools?

Paige: I think one of our most grievous sins has been to tie a child to a failing school and insist that that child stay at this failing school and continue to be crippled. That's almost a way of manufacturing difficulties for our society.

It was a very important decision. It provides an opportunity for parents to have more choice. And I want to put this in perspective by saying that this continued talking about vouchers versus public schools I think misses the point. We're talking about strengthening public schools. A necessary condition for strengthening public schools is the freedom of parents to choose and participate. We think that this will strengthen public schools, not detract from

public schools. It's all a part of the mix to create schools in America that leave no children behind.

Bivins: Some feel it is undisputed that school vouchers drain money from public school systems. Why is it that those most in favor of vouchers have no answer to where the funds will come from to improve the quality of public schools, which educate 90 percent of Americans?

Paige: Yes, there are many people who still see the system as supreme. We differ because we see the child as our major focus. We believe that the purpose of the system is to educate the child. So if the system is not educating the child, we want opportunities to do other things.

The evidence that this drains money away from public schools is not available. Although they have a lot further to go, we see public schools in Cleveland getting better, and I believe a lot of that improvement can be attributed to the fact that parents there have choice.

Now, I personally ran one of the largest public school districts—the seventh largest public school district in the United States of America, in Houston, Texas. We did business with private schools, and we created our own system of charter schools so that we could put competition back into our system. And what it did for us is strengthen our system. My evidence of the fact that we strengthened our system in Houston is one of the schools that the Council of Great City Schools' study showed is actually improving student achievement and actually closing the achievement gap. So those who make that argument I think are well-intended, but miss the point entirely.

Bivins: I'm going to combine a couple of questions here. The NEA recently urged its members not to blame any group in any classroom discussion of the 9/11 attacks. How do you feel schools should explain to students the tragedies of September 11th and other American issues regarding violence?

Paige: It's an opportunity to talk about how precious life is. It's an opportunity to talk about our relationship to each other—a

student's relationship to other students, their relationship with parents and adults. It's an opportunity to talk about how fortunate we are to be Americans, to live in a country where there's freedom. And it's an opportunity to help students learn that there are other parts of the world where freedom doesn't exist as it does here, and that they should be aware of this and be proud of their American freedoms. That freedom, in many cases, is what makes it difficult for many to like us. We have a great country, and there's a lot about this great country that we, as Americans, need to appreciate more. I think this gives us an opportunity to do that.

Bivins: We have a group of students from Chesnut Hill Academy. One asks: Do you feel that the SATs have a future as a legitimate testing program?

Paige: Universities and colleges use SATs as a part of their decision-making matrix for student enrollment. It's important for me to point out that assessment and testing in the *No Child Left Behind Act* operates for entirely different purpose. On the one hand, universities are making predictions about whether students will be able to meet the challenges of that university or college. We want to assess students to know what they don't know so we can teach them that. We want to test children so that we can know if the teaching methods and the teaching material and the teaching strategies are working properly, and so that if they're not, we can adjust them. And also, our taxpayers want to know if their investment is making a difference. That's quite a bit different from the use of the SAT.

I'll just kind of withhold my recommendations about whether universities and colleges should or should not use the SAT, and rely on their judgment. But I will stand firm on the need and in fact the necessity to assess students in the secondary schools and elementary schools.

Bivins: Should teachers be paid more?

Paige: Absolutely teachers should be paid more. Without hesitation, teachers should be paid more. But we should add to that, the salary structure that's based on time and rank needs also to be

altered. It should address a linkage between contribution and compensation. I think that teachers will never be able to get their salaries up to the point where we would all be comfortable until there is some restructuring of the compensation system itself.

Bivins: How much of a priority does the Department place on making sure that all teachers are trained in and are comfortable with information technology skills that are critical to their students' learning and future careers?

Paige: The *No Child Left Behind Act* as well as other programs in the U.S. Department of Education support the development of teaching strategies and the use of technology tools. But we also recognize that there's a need to change how we do this. Just counting the number of computers in the classroom is not the issue for us. The issue is how these new technologies are integrated into a strategy that can cause student achievement to grow more rapidly than otherwise. That's how we see it.

Bivins: What options are there for students in failing rural schools, where the distances almost prohibit any transfers?

Paige: There are special challenges for all types of schools, urban and rural, but the rural schools' challenges would involve innovative approaches such as partnerships between other rural school districts. The e-learning possibilities are there. And sometimes, where there's no opportunity to transfer conveniently, we can bring the supplemental services option into place there much earlier. So there are ways to go about it.

Bivins: How do you plan to make universities more accountable for producing qualified teachers who know the art and skill of teaching, not only in the topic but in monitoring progress, testing, discipline, study plans, homework skills, et cetera?

Paige: I think that the motivation is going to come not only from the U.S. Department of Education, which will use the bully pulpit a lot, but also from some practical real-life pressures from the school systems themselves.

For example, Superintendent Gordon at Elk Grove School District in California got tired of waiting around to get good teachers. And so he took the ball into his own court and developed, in partnership with the local university, his own fast-track teacher preparation system and prepared teachers that way. Soon, Elk Grove was being staffed with teachers who had been trained through that system, and we began to see student achievement just soar.

I think that's going to happen around the nation. In fact, as I left the Houston Independent School District about 18 months ago, Superintendent Tocco in Fort Worth—who, by the way, has a great public school system—and I were talking about getting together and creating a way to train our own teachers. And I think that is happening in a lot of places.

So universities are going to meet this kind of competition, and I think that they will respond to it. And when they respond to it, I think they're going to be capable of winning them.

Bivins: Are you personally troubled by some data that show resegregation of many American school systems?

Paige: I think, in an ideal world, we would have an integrated situation. But there are other factors that drive the resegregation of schools—a lot of housing patterns and part of the economic world.

If we could have things our way, we would have it so that we'd have complete integration all over.

But the way we're going to approach that problem is by making sure that children have the highest possibility of getting a high-quality education. And I believe if we provide a high-quality education to children, this will enhance their employment ability, and it also will influence where they buy homes. And in that way, I think, the integration situation will take care of itself.

Bivins: When will the federal government fully fund its commitment to special education?

Paige: President Bush, in his 2002 budget and also in the 2003

budget, proposed the largest increase in funding ever by an American president for the *Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act*—$1 billion more to provide services for our young people with disabilities. So the president is approaching it in a two-pronged way: one, increasing funding at an historic level, and two, asking to reform the system so we make sure that these new dollars make a difference for children.

We think too many times success is measured by how much we spend. We think that this is an important law. It is too important to not have it reformed so that it can perform at its best. So we will continue to propose historic funding levels but also propose drastically reforming the law.

Bivins: From another Chestnut Hill Academy student, who believes that high school should be more career oriented, that students should be allowed to choose classes based on what kind of life they would lead. What are your thoughts on this?

Paige: I think I could find no argument with that, and especially if we put underneath that high school situation a very strong program in elementary and middle schools. At that time, I think then it would be appropriate for that type of structure in high schools. We've got a lot to do in our high schools. We need to make our high schools stronger and better, and that may be one way to go about it. One of the things that we're doing is the president's State Scholars program, where he's motivating students to take stronger courses, more courses in science and math and foreign languages. But that's an idea. Thank you for it.

Bivins: Given that testing, teacher quality and other requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act* are going to be phased in over the next several years, when would be a fair point in time for the public to evaluate whether the policy is working?

Paige: Evaluation should be ongoing, summative evaluation, formative evaluations, evaluations all the time for different types of purposes. But the evaluation should be based on student performance, not input, not on how much money you spend. We think very soon you're going to be able to see student growth in our goal

to have students read by the end of third grade on grade level; in closing the achievement gap; in narrowing the gap between our students and our Asian and European neighbors in math and science. So those are going to be available soon, and those numbers can be used to evaluate our progress. We look forward to it, because we're going to make a difference.

Bivins: In Texas, black and Hispanic enrollment in law and medical schools fell dramatically when Texas abandoned its affirmative action program. How long will the black and Hispanic communities there have to wait until these levels are restored?

Paige: It's going to be tough for me to speak for Texas anymore; I've not kept up very much with what's going on down there now since I moved my residence to Washington, D.C. But I was recently talking about that with a reporter in Detroit. I called his attention to a bill that Senator Ellis in Texas passed that provides access to Texas undergraduate schools and universities based on students' class rank. All students in the top 10 percent are eligible to be enrolled in any university in Texas that exists, at their choice.

The professional schools would be another issue. And so whether that needs to be looked at or not would be left up to Texans. Preferably, I would like to see programs that provide both Hispanic and African American students wider access to professional schools in Texas and to schools all over the United States.

Bivins: The administration has appropriately focused on reading as its first priority in implementing *No Child Left Behind*. But it would seem that math and science are also critical. What plans do you have for improving K through 12 math and science?

Paige: We do plan a big math and science initiative. But we still keep in mind that when we talk about emphasizing reading, we're not just talking about the ability to read, we see reading as important to all other fields. So when we talk about improving reading, we're not just talking specifically about reading itself. We think it is the one skill upon which all others depend. So we want to make sure that every student has this great skill. We know we need to pin that with other skills, and we're going to do that.

Bivins: Okay, I have one final question. But before we get to that, I'd like to present you with a National Press Club certificate of appreciation and our coveted National Press Club mug.

Paige: Thank you.

Bivins: There has been speculation that you might not be around to usher *No Child Left Behind* through the administration's first term. Would you please comment on reports that you're about to bail out?

Paige: You know, when I first came to Washington, the first several months, that really bothered me. But I think now I'm such a veteran of inside the Beltway that I am not as much bothered by it as I was before. There's a certain type of speculation and gossip. And there's also some journalism that doesn't live up to the high standards that you guys propagate and suggest. There's some of it that just kind of gets pretty close to gossip.

But in this particular case, it's entirely incorrect. I'm going to be right here. I'm committed to what we do, because I think it's important. And if you bear with me just a minute, I put this in a comical way, but I mean it sincerely. I think I gave up being an astronaut some time ago. I don't think I'm going to be able to run the 100 in 9.2, like I'd hoped to. I'm not going to play in the NFL or maybe probably won't even find the cure to cancer. But one thing I can do: I can help in our educational situation. It's the one thing that I want to do. It's the one thing that I know how to do. The president has provided me with an opportunity to make contributions here. I'm so closely aligned with his thinking. We worked together in Texas to improve the Texas system. This opportunity is too important to miss.

You asked earlier about evaluating our efforts. I hope that some time in the next six years or so, you'll be able to look back at this point in time and say, "That is when we decided to raise the bar. That's when student achievement began to soar. That's when children began to realize that potential, and America was a better place for it." And that's what I hope that I can be a part of. And so I'm not going to throw away an opportunity to do that. Thank you.

U.S. Department of Education
Rod Paige
Secretary

Office of Public Affairs
John Gibbons
Director

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